



The Malling School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 118897
LEA Kent
Inspection number 280425
Inspection dates 3 May 2006 to 4 May 2006
Reporting inspector Faysal Mikdadi Al

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Modern (non-selective)	School address	Beech Road
School category	Foundation		East Malling
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		Kent ME19 6DH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01732 840995
Number on roll	546	Fax number	01732 840486
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Christine Roberts
Date of previous inspection	27 September 1999	Headteacher	Mrs Margaret Harriott

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 18	3 May 2006 - 4 May 2006	280425

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The Malling School is a smaller than average school in East Malling near Maidstone. Its mostly White British students come from the local area with a small number travelling from outlying areas. The local area has some pockets of economic deprivation. The school has a large number of students with learning difficulties. The local selective system means that many higher attaining students go to the local grammar schools.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

After a turbulent time caused by staff absence and turnover since the last inspection, The Malling School is now a good school providing good value for money. The leadership team's judgement of the school's effectiveness as satisfactory is too modest. Improvements in monitoring and evaluation by senior and middle managers have led to much improved teaching and learning, especially since the beginning of this year. Consequently, standards of achievement have risen as is shown by the current Year 11 students who are now expected to at least achieve their targets and, in many cases, exceed them. Senior managers have also recognised the limitations of sixth form curriculum provision. As a result, new links have been established with local sixth form providers. Consequently, students are able to study courses more suited to their needs. Although this innovation is still at an early stage, its impact is already there, with students now expressing satisfaction at the widening choices.

Teaching is good in all years. Effective assessment strategies help students to improve their performance. Students with learning difficulties achieve particularly well. Improvements in provision have meant that students' progress has been good in English and science. Students' progress in GCSE mathematics has been outstanding. Senior leaders have also been effective in addressing the poor attendance of a small number of students through the newly appointed attendance officer and guidance managers. These improvements, coupled with advances made since the last inspection, are a clear indicator that the school is now well placed to move forward with continued improvements. Most students speak well of the school. A few feel that the provision made is irrelevant to their needs so they do not attend as regularly as they should. Current curriculum innovations are being made to address this disaffection. However, students are not given enough opportunities to develop their understanding of living in a multi-cultural society.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Provision in the small sixth form is satisfactory. The leadership team recognise the main weakness of an academic curriculum which fails to cater for the needs of all students. Too many students do not complete their courses because of this. Since the appointment of a new leader of the sixth form, this has been partly rectified through links with other schools and colleges. Students can now follow more vocational courses as opportunities expand. At this stage, such opportunities are still somewhat limited. Teaching is good. Students receive good advice on how to improve their work further and this leads them to make satisfactory progress. They are well guided on their next step in education. Students speak well of the school and feel happy attending it.

What the school should do to improve further

- improve the attendance of students so that it is in line with, or exceeds, the national average.

- expand the opportunities for sixth form students to study the subjects of their choice.
- provide students with more opportunities to understand the meaning of living in a culturally diverse society.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Students achieve well in Years 7 to 11, and those in the language unit for students with speech and communication difficulties make outstanding progress.

Students enter Year 7 with standards that are well below average with very few having above average skills. Many have weaknesses in literacy skills, particularly in writing and these weaknesses hinder both standards and achievement in different subjects. Attainment in the national tests at the end of Year 9 is significantly below average although standards have risen faster than the national trend over the past four years. Targets set in English, mathematics and science were all achieved. Progress in English and science has been particularly good for the past two years.

In 2005 the school enjoyed its best ever GCSE examination results and the challenging targets were achieved. although performance at the higher grades A*-C was generally below average, this represented satisfactory progress given students' low prior attainment. Progress in mathematics was outstanding. In science, business studies and music, results were above the national average. The proportion of students gaining five grades A*-G was significantly above average, reflecting the strong progress made by lower-attaining students.

Students currently in Year 11 made good progress as they moved through Years 7 to 9. Inspection evidence shows that this good progress has been maintained and that further improvements in GCSE results are to be expected in summer 2006. Current Year 9 students are also achieving well.

Students in the sixth form make satisfactory progress in the courses that they take. Their progress had been hampered by the lack of opportunities to follow courses that matched their individual needs. This has now been partly resolved through the newly-formed links with several local sixth form providers and through other means. For example, students are making good progress in studying law through distance learning on the Internet with very good support from their mentor.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Students' personal development and well-being are good in the mainstream, and outstanding in the language unit. Personal development programmes, including citizenship, are effective in improving students' low self-esteem and lack of confidence

on entry, and promoting responsible attitudes. Assemblies make an important contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, but the development of students' understanding of life in a multi-cultural society is too limited. Personal development in the sixth form is satisfactory but students' leadership, team-working and enterprise skills are underdeveloped.

Last year's high levels of exclusions have declined significantly over the past few months because the school has more effective procedures for handling any unacceptable behaviour. Attendance, which is below the national average, is beginning to be improved through the work of both the Education Welfare Officer and the newly-appointed attendance officer. Although still below the national average, the improvements made recently indicate the positive impact of the new efforts to improve attendance.

The majority of students are well behaved and enjoy their learning. They respond well to the clear expectations for their conduct, and the calm, orderly school environment. A small number do not find school relevant and they disrupt lessons, or they do not attend. The school has successfully begun to address this problem by widening the opportunities for work-related learning and by the effective use of the new attendance officer. Students feel safe and value being able to turn to teachers for help. They say that bullying is rare and dealt with effectively.

Healthy lifestyles are encouraged by a wide range of sporting activities which are much appreciated by the students. Students understand the need for the healthy options on school menus and would like more of them.

The Key Stage Councils ensure that the school takes good account of students' views when they are put forward at meetings. Students make a good contribution to the community, especially through the support of charities. They are well prepared for their future economic well-being. Work-related skills are enhanced by work experience and by helpful guidance for making choices for careers and further study.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good in both the main school and in the sixth form. In a few lessons, outstanding teaching was seen during the inspection. Lessons are generally well planned and provide students with a good variety of stimulating and challenging tasks. Systematic monitoring of the quality of teaching across the school has led to an accurate analysis of strengths and weaknesses, with action being taken where necessary. Such action has moved the quality of teaching from being satisfactory to becoming overwhelmingly good. Classroom relationships are generally very good, ensuring that students behave well and that lessons proceed briskly. Improved relationships and a better attention to students' views and their needs have improved behaviour enough to bring exclusions down quite dramatically. Teachers know their subjects and their students well and adopt well-chosen methods

for the courses they teach. In a Year 11 food science lesson, for example, students made outstanding progress because the teacher set clear learning objectives at the start of the lesson and was very aware of the students' learning needs. On the few occasions where work set is not well matched to the needs of the students they lose interest.

Where teaching is best, teachers make good use of assessment information to promote high standards and to keep students informed about how well they are doing. In-class support for students with learning difficulties and disabilities is good and the excellent work of the school's language unit results in these students making outstanding progress. The language unit staff prepare lessons well, give a great deal of attention to students' individual needs and present them with consistently exciting work that keeps them interested at all times.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 4

The curriculum is satisfactory overall. It is good in the main school, but inadequate in the sixth form, although these inadequacies are now being addressed through work with partner schools and colleges. Since the last inspection the school has introduced a range of vocational courses, for students in Years 10 and 11. These courses are popular with students, including a few who have previously been disaffected but who now attend school more regularly and behave better. In the delivery of some of the courses the school works very productively with a local college and a further expansion of these courses is planned to include a greater number of students. Work experience is well established in Year 10 and contributes well to students' future economic wellbeing. The school provides a wide range of enrichment activities for the students with plenty of opportunities for sport, drama, dance, music, after-school clubs and educational visits. These all contribute significantly to students' personal development.

The sixth form curriculum is inadequate. This is because the curriculum offered has been limited to academic subjects and lacks sufficient vocational opportunities. However, the school is now part of a local consortium of schools and colleges which enable more students than before to follow their chosen post-16 courses. Students have expressed their satisfaction at these developments.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school takes good care of its students. Students throughout the school are well known and supported. Procedures for tracking their academic progress are effective. Information about students' progress is well used. Students are strongly guided and supported by the well-structured pastoral system, and able to turn to their form tutors whenever they need help and advice about matters of immediate concern. Their achievement in tests and examinations is well supported by carefully planned mentoring and revision programmes. For instance, Year 9 students are helped to settle and

approach their end of Year 9 tests with greater confidence. They begin the day with a much appreciated relaxing breakfast, and successful revision sessions immediately before doing the tests.

Students with learning difficulties are extremely well supported. The language unit is an outstanding strength. Its work is very well integrated with that of the school as a whole. This enables students with speech and language difficulties to make excellent progress because of the way that they are given excellent individual support and because of the fact that the tasks set for them are well matched to what they can do.

Suitable child protection and risk assessment procedures are in place and staff are fully conversant with these. Any students at risk are identified early and effective arrangements are made for their support. The school works very closely with external agencies, including a recently appointed community youth tutor, to ensure students' safety and well-being.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and the decisive actions of the acting headteacher, associate headteacher and a newly constituted leadership team have put an end to a difficult period caused by staff absence and turnover. Leadership and management are good. The decisive actions have included raising staff morale, helping subject leaders to monitor and evaluate their work, having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning through an improved programme of monitoring and evaluation and making a start on improving provision in the small sixth form. These initiatives have already begun to have an impact on standards of achievement, and indicate that the school has good capacity to sustain its rate of improvement. For example, current GCSE coursework indicates that the current Year 11 is likely to comfortably attain the targets set. Sixth form students say that they are now happier with the wider opportunities provided. The school has begun to make better use of the recently established links with local providers to enhance sixth form opportunities.

Senior leaders as well as subject leaders monitor the school's work closely. Their self-evaluation procedures are effective. The recently-appointed guidance managers have had a positive impact on ensuring the behaviour is mostly good. Along with the recently-appointed attendance manager, they are currently working hard to ensure that disaffected students see the relevance of schooling so that attendance may improve further. Early indicators are that their efforts are paying off as the attendance figures improve and the figures for exclusions drop significantly. Parents' and other interested parties' views are listened to in addressing these issues.

Governance is good. Governors know the school well and are supportive of the leadership team. Each governor is linked to a subject area which allows them opportunities to challenge leaders. For example, governors have been instrumental in

pushing for improvements in provision through participating in agreements made with another local school.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	3
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	4	
How well learners enjoy their education	3	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	4
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you very much for making us feel so welcome in your school during our recent inspection visit. We enjoyed listening to you talking about your work. We particularly enjoyed looking at some of your really good art work displayed around the school.

We agree with your positive views. Yours is a good school that is well led and where the teachers are good. There are a lot of other things that are good about it:

Your end of Year 9 test results have been improving, although they are still well below the national average. The GCSE results in 2005 were the best the school has achieved so far.

You make good progress in the main school and excellent progress in the language unit.

You are well looked after, well guided and advised. You behave well and enjoy being in the school.

The curriculum being offered is good in the main school. It is still a little limited in the sixth form although it is improving because of the new links with other schools and colleges.

In order to improve things further, we have suggested that the school needs to work on the following three areas:

Improve the rates of attendance. You can help with this by ensuring that you attend school regularly.

Widen the opportunities available for sixth form students to study courses that match their needs.

Give you opportunities to better understand what it means to live in Britain's multi-cultural society.

Once again, thank you very much for your kind welcome, courtesy and help. We wish you the very best for the future.